

**AHAW UNIT**

**Scientific Network on Animal Health and Welfare**

**Minutes of the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting**

**Held on 17-18 10 2013, Parma**

**(Agreed on 20 02 2014)**

**Participants**

- **Network Representatives of Member States and Pre-accession countries:**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Pre-accession countries</b>	<b>Name</b>
Austria	SCHMOLL, Friedrich	Bosnia and Herzegovina	ČOLAKOVIĆ, Armin
Bulgaria	CHOBANOV, Georgi	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	TERZIEVSKIS, Dimitar
Cyprus	KRASIAS, Giorgos	Kosovo	HETA, Sadik
Czech Republic	RENCOVA, Eva	Montenegro	ŠEKARIĆ, Marko
Estonia	VILTROP, Arvo	Serbia	DIMITRIJEVIĆ, Mirjana
Finland	AALTONEN, Taina		
Hungary	VECSEI, Anna Luca		
Iceland	JONASDOTTIR, Thora		
Ireland	O'NUALLAIN, Niall		
Italy	CALISTRİ, Paolo		
Latvia	OLSEVSKIS, Edvins		
Netherlands	ARENDZEN, Iris		
Spain	MUNOZ HURTADO, Beatriz		
Sweden	CARLSSON, Ulla		
United Kingdom	ROBERTS, Helen		

- **EFSA:**

Franck Berthe, Denise Candiani, Sandra Correia, Sofie Dhollander, Maria Ferrara, Andrea Gervelmeyer, Silvia Nicolau Solano, Frank Verdonck (AHAW), Jeff Moon (AFSCO)

## **1. Welcome and apologies for absence**

The Chair welcomed the participants. In addition to EU Member States representatives, the meeting was attended by representatives from Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia.

Apologies were received from Belgium, Denmark, France (provided presentation by web conference), Germany, Greece, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

## **2. Adoption of agenda**

The agenda was adopted without changes.

## **3. Declarations of interest**

In accordance with EFSA's Policy on Independence and Scientific Decision-Making Processes regarding Declarations of Interests (DoIs)<sup>1</sup> and the Decision of the Executive Director implementing this Policy<sup>2</sup>, members of networks, peer review meetings, networking meetings and their alternates shall be invited to complete and submit an Annual Declaration of interest (ADoI).

EFSA screened the ADoI filled in by the experts invited for the present meeting. No conflicts of interests related to the issues discussed in this meeting have been identified during the screening process or at the Oral Declaration of interest (ODOI) at the beginning of this meeting.

The Chair thanked the representatives that have submitted an ADoI.

## **4. Agreement of the minutes of the 4th meeting of the Scientific Network on Risk Assessment in Animal Health and Welfare held on 21-22 11 2013, Parma.**

The minutes were agreed by written procedure and published on the EFSA website.

## **5. Topics for discussion**

### **5.1 Outcome of the AHAW workshops at the World Veterinary Congress and Epizone meeting**

Justyna Jaskiewicz provided the background on this project and set the scene for the discussions. The outcomes of 3 workshops aiming at identifying ways to improving EFSA risk assessment in the area of animal health were presented. During the first workshop, a brainstorming among AHAW Panel members identified drivers for emerging risks related to environment, society, economics, collectively referred to as "context". The discussions during the second workshop in Prague focused on methodological approaches, which would allow incorporation of this context into the risk assessment process. The third workshop in Brussels reflected on lessons learned from the latest animal disease emergence events in Europe, from which scientific investigation and risk assessment could benefit. The three

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/keydocs/docs/independencepolicy.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/keydocs/docs/independencerules.pdf>

meetings proposed potential improvements of the animal health risk assessment framework in the area of data collection, methodology and risk question formulation. The annual meeting of the AHAW Network 2013 is considered the fourth workshop of this series, as it explores avenues for improving collaboration with MS by gathering Member States' representative's views on the usefulness of the Network, reviewing its terms of reference, and agreeing on the Network's workplan for 2014.

## **5.2 Outcome of the recent review of the scientific networks of EFSA**

Jeff Moon from the EFSA Advisory Forum and Scientific Cooperation (AFSCO) unit presented the outcome of the recent review of the EFSA scientific networks. This review had been suggested by the EFSA Advisory Forum Discussion Group on Medium Term Planning in June 2012. It focussed on the terms of references of the various EFSA networks and applied an online questionnaire to gather the view of members of the EFSA Advisory Forum and networks.

## **5.3 Renewal of the Network's mandate**

Andrea Gervelmeyer presented the current terms of reference of the AHAW Network. The network discussed how these could be modified for the new mandate covering the period 2014-2017. Elements of the network that were considered as useful by MS representatives are the harmonisation of approaches to tasks that several MS have to address, the assistance the network provides in bringing together the relevant expertise needed, in disseminating information on current, past and future activities of EFSA and the MS, and in identifying research needs and priorities in the area of animal health and welfare. MS representatives suggested planning network activities for 1, possibly 2 years. MS need to have sufficient time to discuss and agree the annual network workplan within their country. Animal welfare issues were considered to be underrepresented in the current network activities. To give greater weight to animal welfare risk assessment, it was suggested to hold welfare and health meetings separately and allow MS to send their welfare experts and their health experts to the respective meetings. Proper representation of a MS by the representative necessitates good preparation of meeting within the MS, therefore a specific agenda is needed at least 1 month prior to the network meeting. Agendas of upcoming meetings might already be developed at the previous meeting. Groups of network members could work on specific issues and prepare documents for network meetings to deepen the scientific discussions during the meetings. In the longer term, it could be interesting and potentially beneficial to share information on RA methodology used in plant and animal health.

## **5.4 Joint meeting with ECDC Network on Emerging and Vectorborne Diseases**

Andrea Gervelmeyer presented the meeting of the AHAW Network with the EFSA Taskforce on Zoonoses Data collection and the ECDC Emerging and Vectorborne Disease Network that is scheduled to take place on 5-6 December 2013 at ECDC in Stockholm. The meeting is organised under the umbrella of the EFSA-ECDC initiative to strengthen the collaboration between the animal health and public health sector in the area of non-foodborne zoonoses and potentially zoonotic diseases to improve early detection and rapid joint risk assessment of these issues. At the meeting, plans for joint activities of the EFSA and ECDC networks will be discussed with the aim to establish a roadmap for the collaboration of the ECDC and EFSA networks on non-foodborne zoonoses.

## **5.5 Ongoing and upcoming projects in animal health and animal welfare**

## **Multifactorial approach of the use of animal and non-animal based measures to assess the welfare of pigs (M-2013-0236)**

Silvia Nicolau Solanu presented the mandate on a multifactorial approach of the use of animal and non-animal based measures to assess the welfare of pigs. The Commission is planning to develop guidelines to facilitate the proper implementation of the requirements of Council Directive 2008/120/EC laying down minimum standards for the protection of pigs as part of the EU Animal Welfare Strategy 2012-2015. Therefore, a request was sent to EFSA to deliver a scientific opinion to assess the multi-factorial interaction and associations between risk factors, welfare consequences and animal-based measures to assess the welfare of pigs, especially those welfare parameters related to the provision of manipulable material and the avoidance of tail. The terms of reference as provided by the Commission are

1. Identify the multiple interactions between risk factors, welfare consequences and animal-based and non-animal based measures.
2. Identify the strength and predictive capacity of the above identified interactions
3. Propose a model to evaluate how likely certain welfare consequences may happen given specific risk factors and which animal- and/or non-animal based measures would better fit for the assessment of those consequences.

The EFSA Panel on Animal Health and Welfare established a Working Group which is gathering data to be used to address the terms of reference of this mandate. EFSA is seeking the collaboration of the AHAW Network to share information and datasets on pig tail biting and enrichment. Useful datasets are:

- a) Controlled experiments which provide a quantitative relationship between specific risk factors and tail biting;
- b) Epidemiological studies relating farm risk factors to tail biting outcome;
- c) Datasets with multiple outcome measures (including tail biting) such as the Welfare Quality protocol.

Member States were invited to provide such datasets to EFSA.

## **Bovine Tuberculosis**

Frank Verdonck presented the request to EFSA for a scientific opinion on bovine tuberculosis vaccination. The Commission is in need of updated scientific advice to critically and scientifically assess and support the design of the large scale field trials necessary to gain knowledge related to the performance of vaccines against bTB for cattle. There is a need for scientific advice for well-designed targeted trials that might be put in place to fill the knowledge gaps on this matter. Taking into account the strategic importance of the design phase of the field trials is appropriate to ensure that the preparation of the trials takes into account all the necessary elements that should be integrated in an optimised design.

Helen Roberts presented the planned UK field trials of cattle BCG vaccine and the associated diagnostic test. The UK government's bovine TB control programmes aim at achieving eradication of bovine TB. While a cattle vaccine alone will not eradicate bTB, it is an important tool to reduce the weight of infection. She described the epidemiology of bTB in Great Britain and explained the roadmap towards the vaccine field trials. It is hoped that the field trials will produce data to support the licensing of the vaccine and also produce data to

gain international acceptance for the use of vaccine and DIVA (differentiating infected from vaccinated animals).

Frank Verdonck presented a self-task of the AHAW Panel on a conceptual framework for bTB. Bovine tuberculosis is included as one of the animal diseases to be eradicated in the European Union since 1964. Substantial progress towards eradication has been achieved by the control policies implemented. However, during the years 2006-2011, the proportion of existing cattle herds infected or positive for *M. bovis* in the EU (all MSs) has remained stable. Further decrease has not been observed and re-emergency is being reported in several countries. Several EFSA opinions have looked at specific aspects of this complex picture and it is felt that an optimal approach for scientific advice to risk managers should contemplate the interactions between animal populations and their environment, as well as the specificities of testing and culling programs applied in different field situations. Therefore, the AHAW Panel intends to develop a conceptual framework for a holistic approach to bovine tuberculosis. The objective is to establish and maintain a broad understanding of the epidemiology of bovine tuberculosis, relevant to effective surveillance and control, throughout the EU, while addressing specific questions posed by the Commission. The AHAW network will be consulted to identify bTB experts that could participate as hearing expert to a specific working group meeting in March 2014. The aim of this meeting will be to identify knowledge gaps that hamper the understanding of bTB in the European context and to review a draft version of the conceptual model prepared by the working group. The publication of a Statement from the Panel is scheduled for May 2014.

### **Monitoring procedures at slaughter**

Denise Candiani presented EFSA's current work on four scientific opinions on the welfare of cattle, pigs, sheep and goats, chicken and turkeys during the slaughter process. This work is carried out in the context of the EU legislation on the protection of animals at the time of killing. According to this legislation, business operators must ensure that animals do not present any signs of consciousness after stunning and before death. The opinions propose monitoring indicators to be used for checking the efficacy of the stunning and slaughter process. Sampling protocols to be put in place at slaughterhouses are also being developed, based on a mathematical model for the calculation of the number of animals needed for sampling.

### **Work Programme of the ANSES Risk Assessment Department for 2013/2014**

Gilles Salvat presented the work programme of the ANSES Risk Assessment Department for 2013/2014. In the area of animal health, activities include risk-ranking of diseases (in cats and dogs, fish, molluscs and crustaceans, and in overseas French departments), Schmallenberg virus, co-exposure of bees to different stress factors and their effects, safety and efficacy of products used as alternatives for antimicrobials, bTB, the effect of extremely low frequency electromagnetic fields on animal health and performance, and emerging or re-emerging diseases. In the area of animal welfare, a permanent Working Group with 22 experts will work on an evaluation of sheep handling guidelines at slaughterhouses and welfare aspects of the main systems of stunning and killing, the evaluation of cages for protection of laying hens (nests and dust bath/litter substrate), and scientific support for the French representative in the European working group for the development of guidelines regarding the welfare of farmed pigs (Directive 2008/120/EC).

## **Mandate on sheep welfare**

Maria Ferrara presented the state of play of a recently received mandate on the welfare of sheep for wool, meat and milk production, which requests to:

- identify the main factors and welfare consequences and perform the risk characterisation for the farming of sheep for wool, meat and milk production, taking into account differences in genetic lines, local production systems, environmental conditions and nutrition;
- based on the risk assessment carried out following point 1 and on the analysis of breed distribution, to identify the main welfare risks common to the different production typologies and main breeds in order to develop a matrix linking breeds/common risks/welfare consequences/risk characterization;
- based on the outcome of the above terms of reference, to identify the animal-based measures that can be used to assess the welfare of sheep and the main welfare risks identified.

The mandate was sent in the frame of the new EU Animal Welfare Strategy which foresees the introduction of animal-based indicators in a revised animal welfare legal framework as well as to strengthen international technical collaboration on welfare, including sheep. The deadline for the finalization of the scientific opinion is December 2014. An ad-hoc Working Group has been established. The main sheep farming systems across the EU will be defined and described in the opinion. EFSA calls for the contribution of the AHAW Network by providing information on sheep population in their countries and contributing to possible dedicated AHAW Network meetings. Follow-up with the Network will be ensured as soon as appropriate, based on the progress of the opinion.

## **Guidance on the assessment criteria for studies evaluating the effectiveness of stunning interventions regarding animal protection at the time of killing**

Andrea Gervelmeyer presented the EFSA guidance on the assessment criteria for studies evaluating the effectiveness of stunning interventions regarding animal protection at the time of killing. The guidance defines the assessment process and the criteria to be applied to studies on known new or modified legal stunning methods to determine their suitability for further assessment. It sets the criteria that need to be fulfilled in regard to eligibility, reporting quality and methodological quality. In addition, the guidance also specifies general aspects applicable to studies on stunning methods that should be considered when studying the effectiveness of stunning methods. The draft guidance has been presented for a public consultation between 15 July and 18 September 2013 and is scheduled for adoption in Nov 2013. Publication is planned for early December 2013.

## **Activities on *Echinococcus multilocularis***

Andrea Gervelmeyer presented the EFSA activities on *Echinococcus multilocularis*. They are related to Regulation (EU) No 1152/2011 and encompass an annual analysis and critical assessment of the *Echinococcus multilocularis* monitoring programmes of the four EU Member States that claim to be free of the parasite, and an Art. 36 collaboration programme that shall identify and collate the current knowledge and data on *Echinococcus multilocularis*, applying systematic reviews of literature and data and providing data to EFSA, in preparation for a future mandate on *Echinococcus multilocularis* infections in animals.

Ulla Carlsson presented the present status of *Echinococcus multilocularis* in Sweden. Following the detection of *Echinococcus multilocularis* in Sweden in February 2011, a

multidisciplinary consulting group has been established. A considerable number of foxes as well as rodents and dogs have been sampled in 2011, resulting in a prevalence estimate of around 0.1 % in foxes in Sweden; all rodents and dogs tested were negative. Consequently, intensive monitoring in one positive area was carried out to establish a baseline, and repeated monitoring of the whole country with statistical sampling and more cost effective sampling and analysis, as well as monitoring of the fox population were implemented. The intensive sampling of red fox faeces in the positive area identified a prevalence of 0.8%.

### **Use of low atmosphere pressure system (LAPS) for stunning poultry**

Sandra Correia presented the current work of EFSA on the use of low atmosphere pressure system (LAPS) for stunning of poultry. This mandate has the same background as the mandates for scientific opinions concerning electrical parameters for the stunning of lambs and concerning the use of carbon dioxide for stunning of rabbits. Council Regulation 1099/2009 on the protection of animals at the time of killing lays down the allowed stunning methods and related specifications in Annex I. This Annex can be amended to take account of scientific and technical progress, on the basis of an EFSA opinion. At present, the Regulation does not allow the use of low atmosphere pressure systems (LAPS) for stunning of poultry. EFSA was requested to assess four scientific publications received by the Commission to assess whether the inclusion of this method in the EU Regulation is possible. A working group was created and has been addressing the LAPS mandate in line with the “Guidance on the assessment criteria for studies evaluating the effectiveness of stunning interventions regarding animal protection at the time of killing”.

### **Request for an update of the 2010 scientific opinion on African Swine Fever of the AHAW Panel**

Sofie Dhollander presented the request for an update of the scientific opinion on African Swine Fever of the AHAW Panel of 2010. The epidemiological situation of ASF has changed in Eastern Europe in the last years and the presence of the disease close to the EU border can represent a serious risk to the livestock population of the EU and a challenge for animal health risk managers. It is therefore necessary to better determine the extent of the problem in order to better target preventive and control measures in the light of the current evolution of the ASF epidemic at the EU border. Therefore, the European Commission has requested a new scientific opinion from the AHAW Panel, updating the scientific opinion issued by EFSA in 2010, with the following terms of reference:

ToR 1: Update the significance of the occurrence and risk of endemicity of ASF in the countries neighbouring the EU at higher risk;

ToR 2: The evaluation of all the pathways of introduction of ASF into the EU, ranking them on the basis of their level of risk with a view to enhance preparedness and prevention.

The deadline for delivering this opinion is March 2014.

### **VECTORNET: A European network for sharing data on the geographic distribution of arthropod vectors, transmitting human and animal disease agents**

Sofie Dhollander presented the call for tenders for the future Vectorsnet project. Regarding the recurring need for vector distribution data for risk assessments, which are often not available, or of divergent quality- and considering the similar data collection efforts by ECDC and EFSA on geographical distribution of vectors- a call for proposals was launched for an inter-institutional framework contract to submit tenders for a collaborative approach to data collection activities on vectors, to support the production of risk assessments and rapid

outbreak assessments, contributing to a timely and appropriate response for vector-borne diseases in the EU. The terms of reference are the following:

- to collect existing published or unpublished information on the geographical distribution of priority vectors (presence/absence and where possible measures of abundance) using an already developed web-based application

- to further develop the Network of medical entomologists and public health professionals, already established under the VBORNET project, and to include veterinary entomologists and veterinarians working in the field of vectors and / or VBD.

- to deliver ad-hoc scientific advice to support ECDC and EFSA concerning technical questions about vector surveillance and VBD in humans and animals

The deadline for proposals is end of January 2014.

## **6. Next meetings**

It was agreed that two annual network meetings in 2014 should each be organised as 2-day meetings with a full day on animal welfare and a full day on animal health. The first meeting should take place in June, the second meeting should take place in November 2014.